

# NPR REPORTER SLAMS PRIESTS

On May 27, a reporter for National Public Radio (NPR) published a piece that was posted on the NPR website titled, "Just Doing His Job Is Catholic Official's Defense." The following is the opening of the story:

"A clergy sex-abuse trial in is [sic] reaching a crescendo in a Philadelphia courtroom. One defendant is James Brennan, a priest accused of trying to rape a minor, *which is not that unusual*." [Emphasis added.]

We responded by saying in this day and age when it is considered taboo to make sweeping generalizations of a negative sort about so many demographic groups, it is astonishing that NPR allowed this bigoted swipe at priests. What made this offensive characterization so doubly despicable is that Brennan was initially charged with anally raping his alleged victim, yet before the trial the charge was amended to *attempted* rape.

Within a couple of weeks, NPR responded to our complaint and removed the phrase from the reporter's story. She explained that the phrase was "inartfully written" and what she meant was that "trials of priests for alleged sexual abuse that are not so unusual."

In a June 5 column, NPR ombudsman Edward Schumacher-Matos addressed the situation and agreed that the article contained a "clumsy phrase." He then explained that because the piece came in on a weekend when the editing staff is stretched thin, it got by.

For the record, almost all priests in the nation—now as well as before—have never had a single charge of sexual molestation made against them. Of those who have, a large share of the accusations have been proven false. Of the guilty, the most common form of abuse was "inappropriate touching"—not rape—and

the most common victim was an adolescent. So to feed the perception that it is not unusual to find rapist priests was unconscionable. We are glad they removed the misleading language.